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Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention

Eighth periodic report of States parties due in 2017

Cyprus*

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List of abbreviations

ACPCDV	Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Domestic Violence
AP	Action Plan
APHFV	Association for the Prevention and Handling of Family Violence
CAHRP	Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights Protection/ Ombudsman
CGE	Commissioner for Gender Equality
CGRC	Cyprus Gender Research Centre
CPC	Cyprus Productivity Centre
CPCR	Commissioner for the Protection of Children's Rights
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ESF	European Structural Funds
GECEVT	Gender Equality Committee in Employment and Vocational Training
HOR	House of Representatives
MIGS	Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies
MIP	Manual Interdepartmental Procedures
MJPO	Ministry of Justice and Public Order
MLWSI	Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Insurance
MOEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
MCGCTHB	Multidisciplinary Coordinating Group for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings
NAP	National Action Plan
NAPATHB	National Action Plan Against Trafficking in Human Beings
NAPE	National Action Plan on Employment
NAPGE	National Action Plan on Gender Equality
NAPMCECPH	National Action Plan on Minimising the Consequences of the Economic Crisis in Public Health
NAPPCFV	National Action Plan on the Prevention and Combating of Family Violence
NAPYE	National Action Plan on Youth Employment
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NMWR	National Machinery for Women's Rights
NRM	National Referral Mechanism
PCGE	Police Committee for Gender Equality
PES	Public Employment Service
POCD	Police Office for Combating Discrimination

POCTHB	Police Office for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings
SAPGE	Strategic Action Plan on Gender Equality
SP	Strategic Plan
SWS	Social Welfare Service
TCGE	Technical Committee on Gender Equality
THB	Trafficking in Human Beings
VAW	Violence Against Women

Present report: The eighth periodic report of Cyprus on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

Previous report: The combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Cyprus — CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/6-7, 9 September 2011

Concluding observations: Concluding Observations adopted by the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women — CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/6-7, 25 March 2013

Follow-up report: Information provided by Cyprus in follow-up to the Concluding Observations — CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/6-7/Add.1

Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence: Istanbul Convention

I. Introduction

1. The eighth periodic report of Cyprus on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (hereinafter the "present report"), was prepared in accordance with the "Harmonised guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties, including guidelines on a common core document and treaty-specific documents" (HRI/MC/2006/3 and Corr.1) and the Revised Guidelines for the Preparation of Reports by State Parties, 3.6.2009 (HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6). It addresses the issues and recommendations raised in the Concluding Observations adopted by the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/6-7, 25 March 2013), (hereinafter the "Concluding Observations") during the consideration of the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Cyprus (CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/6-7, 9 September 2011) (hereinafter the "previous report") and covers the developments on elimination of discrimination against women, and gender equality, during the period May 2011 to February 2017. The present report is accompanied by an updated core document.

2. The present report has been prepared by the Law Commissioner of Cyprus who, pursuant to a decision by the Council of Ministers, is entrusted with ensuring Cyprus' compliance with its reporting obligations under international human rights instruments. It was compiled based on information and data provided by the Ministry of Justice and Public Order (MJPO) through the National Machinery for Women's Rights (NMWR), the competent authority for the purposes of the Convention, as well as the ministries and government departments that have competence for specific matters. Information was also obtained from the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights (CAHR), the Commissioner for Gender Equality (CGE) and relevant NGOs, especially women's organizations. The present report has been communicated to women's organizations and NGOs dealing with human rights issues as well as to professional associations.

3. The CEDAW Concluding Observations were timely disseminated, in English and Greek, to the ministries and other government authorities, the HOR and the Judiciary, as well as to NGOs, universities and other institutions for the purposes of awareness-raising and implementation and were posted to the website of the MJPO. Similarly, the CEDAW with the Optional Protocol and the Committee's recommendations have been disseminated to all parties with an interest in gender equality and women's empowerment.

4. In the period under review, Cyprus faced severe economic challenges and was led in 2012 to request financial assistance from the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Troika). As a result, in 2013 Cyprus signed a Memorandum of Understanding on an economic adjustment programme agreed with the Troika.

5. Despite adverse economic conditions, policy and legislative measures on gender equality were further expanded and consolidated in the period under review. The Strategic Action Plan on Gender Equality (SAPGE) (2014-2017), initiated by the NMWR, is the primary tool in promoting gender equality, aimed at addressing issues raised by the CEDAW Committee through six broad areas of objectives (see also Article 2). It is of the utmost importance that the SAPGE was designed to promote the implementation of the Concluding Observations.

6. A number of other National Action Plans (NAPs) and strategies have been developed and implemented that either address specific issues of gender equality or routinely incorporate gender mainstreaming. These include the National Action Plan on Youth Employment (NAPYE) (2014-2017), the National Action Plan on the Prevention and Combating of Family Violence (NAPPCFV) (2017-2019), the

National Action Plan Against Trafficking in Human Beings (NAPATHB) (2013-2015), the National Action Plan on Minimising the Consequences of the Economic Crisis in Public Healthcare (NAPMCECPH) (2013-2015), the Strategic Plan (SP) (2016-2018) of the Ministry of Health and the Action Plan on Gender Equality (2014-2017) of the Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC).

7. Due to the continued illegal foreign occupation of 36.2% of the territory of the Republic of Cyprus, the Government is not in a position to exercise effective control over all of its territory and cannot ensure the application of the international human rights instruments or take measures to comply with recommendations of Treaty Bodies in areas not under its effective control. This is a fact reflected in the Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Question of Human Rights in Cyprus (A/HRC/22/18).

8. As a consequence, the Government of the Republic of Cyprus is unable to ensure full realization of women's rights and gender equality laws, policies and programmes for those living in the occupied areas. It is relevant to recall that the accession of Cyprus to the European Union was subject to Protocol 10 of the 2003 Act of Accession, according to which "the application of the acquis shall be suspended in those areas of the Republic of Cyprus in which the Government of the Republic of Cyprus does not exercise effective control". Consequently, all information and data presented in the present report concern the Government-controlled areas.

II. Progress on the implementation of the Convention

Article 1
Interpretation of discrimination

9. The Parental Leave and Leave on Grounds of Force Majeure (Amendment) Law, 2012 [L.47(I)/2012], (repealing Law 69(I) of 2002), for harmonisation with the Council Directive 2010/18/EU of 8 March 2010 implementing the revised Framework Agreement on parental leave concluded by BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC and repealing Directive 96/34/EC, as well as for harmonisation with the Council Directive 97/80/EC of 15 December 1997 on the burden of proof in cases of discrimination based on sex, prescribes the following:

(a) "Direct discrimination based on sex" shall mean unfavourable treatment directly and obviously related to sex;

(b) "Principle of equal treatment" shall mean the absence of any discrimination based on gender, either directly or indirectly;

(c) "Discrimination based on sex" shall mean any act or omission which constitutes or entails unfavourable treatment based on sex;

(d) "Indirect discrimination based on sex" shall exist where an apparently neutral provision, criterion, or practice would disadvantage/raise a substantially higher proportion of members of one sex, unless that provision, criterion or practice is appropriate and necessary and can be justified by objective factors unrelated to sex.

Article 2
Elimination of legal and real discrimination

10. The government strategy towards gender equality is a dual approach, i.e., implementing specific actions for women while promoting gender mainstreaming in all policy areas.

Legal measures

11. In the period under review, the legal framework has further improved in terms of elimination of discrimination against women in harmonisation with the relevant international instruments, in particular the Convention. The new legislative provisions are mainly in the areas of: family and child abuse; employment and, in particular, maternity protection; violence against and trafficking of women; and equality for men and women in terms of access to goods and services. For a full list of legislative measures which have been enacted in the period under review, see annex.

Awareness-raising

12. The policy of raising awareness and informing women of their rights has been further developed and expanded, with all relevant parties disseminating information. Ministries and other government authorities, and in particular the NMWR, as well as professional organizations and NGOs, have delivered information through seminars, lectures, conferences and publications.

13. The Equality Body of the CAHRP launched a campaign in 2016 in order to inform pregnant women, new mothers and women in general of their rights under national legislation. A leaflet was issued and disseminated to all public hospitals, many private clinics and to all Citizen Service Centres. Also, it was well received via the media (press, radio, TV) and people contacted the CAHRP, during and after the campaign, in order to obtain more information.

14. The Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Domestic Violence (ACPCDV), in collaboration with ministries and equality bodies, has delivered a number of seminars.

15. The Department of Labour of the MLWSI has been distributing to employees' and employers' associations, and to the public, informational leaflets on sex discrimination, including pregnancy discrimination. This information is provided in Greek and English, thus making it available to the main foreign ethnicities in Cyprus.

16. Gender equality has also been included in the in-service training seminars of the Pedagogical Institute of the MOEC and the Police Academy. Most importantly, training, raising awareness/education of public officers, including prosecutors, judges and lawyers, has been included in the SAPGE (2014-2017) initiated by the NMWR.

17. Women are increasingly taking advantage of the extra-judicial mechanisms (equality bodies) set up by legislation with the mandate to investigate complaints of discrimination and violations of human rights. The CAHRP Office plays a key role as it is one of the main extra-judicial institutions with the authority, under legislation, to investigate relevant complaints. A total of 468 complaints were received by the Equality Body of the CAHRP Office during the period March 2011 to August 2016. In terms of victims' willingness to seek help through the national Helpline, data collection has improved as more women have been encouraged to report cases of violence. The Helpline, operated by the Association for the

Prevention and Handling of Family Violence (APHFV) since 1990, offers counselling support, provides information on victims' basic rights and options, and puts victims in contact with other services dealing with domestic violence. It operates daily, including holidays and weekends, free of charge. During 2015, the Helpline received 7769 calls, of which 1511 became cases.

Action plans

18. Further to the enactment of legislative measures safeguarding women's rights, several NAPs have been developed in line with the national policy on gender equality. The SAPGE (2014-2017), adopted by the Council of Ministers on 23 December 2014 (Decision No. 78.071), was prepared by the Gender Equality Unit of the MJPO in close collaboration with all government departments, the CGE, women's organizations and other NGOs, academic institutions and human rights bodies. It adopts a comprehensive approach, addressing issues in six thematic areas/priority objectives: administrative/institutional reform for the effective promotion of equality between men and women; law reform/improvement of the legislative framework; balanced participation of women and men in public and political life; combating all forms of violence against women; economic empowerment of women; and elimination of gender stereotypes. Each priority objective is broken down into interim objectives, actions, implementing agencies, implementation time, cost and monitoring indicators.

19. It is worth noting that the SAPGE (2014-2017) was formulated based on the Interim Evaluation Report of the NAPGE (2007-2013) by an external evaluator (see also page 16) and, most importantly, the Concluding Observations. Moreover, in the formulation of the SAPGE (2014-2017), EU laws and policies, particularly the European Strategy on Equality between Women and Men and (2010-2015), the Development Strategy of the European Union "Europe 2020" and the European Pact for Gender Equality 2011-2020 were taken into account.

20. In this regard, the SAPGE (2014-2017) is the main instrument for implementing CEDAW's recommendations and promoting gender equality. Several other APs, which have been modelled on the SAPGE, directly or indirectly, address the issue of equality. These include the following: NAPYE (2014-2017); NAPPCFV (2017-2019); NAPATHB (2013-2015); NAPMCECPH (2013-2015); and the SP of the Ministry of Health (2016-2018).

European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF)

21. The gender perspective is also considered within the framework of European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) in Cyprus. Gender equality as a horizontal policy is being considered and promoted through the preparation and implementation of programmes co-financed by ESIF over the period 2014-2020, including monitoring, reporting and evaluation actions.

22. Gender equality constitutes a General Ex-Ante Conditionality (Gen. EAC 2), which is a prerequisite for the effective and efficient implementation of the programmes. The various criteria of the Gen. EAC 2 have been fully met as of 2014.

23. The competent authorities for gender equality are participating as members of the Consultative Committee for the design and strategic monitoring of the programming documents 2014-2020, as well as of the Monitoring Committee of the co-financed programmes.

24. The managing authority (Directorate General for European Programmes, Coordination and Development) published detailed guidelines on the compliance of programmes/projects and schemes with the EU Law related to public procurement

procedures, anti-discrimination and gender equality, environment and state aid. Accordingly, all projects and schemes must be certified by the competent authorities that they comply with the EU Laws on the above-mentioned policies. Where a negative evaluation is given to a project, it will not be approved for co-financing. The evaluation plan of the programmes includes a thematic evaluation on gender mainstreaming, which is to commence in 2019.

Research and development

25. Gender equality is also considered in research and development. Providing equal opportunities to scientists irrespective of their gender will help harness the full potential of Europe's talented workforce. Within this framework, Cyprus focuses on eliminating gender parity barriers in the field of research and development (R&D). Emphasis is on eliminating stereotyping of women's inferiority in their ability to compete with men and devotion to their careers. This is promoted through measures to facilitate the reconciliation of family and work life, as well other specific measures that support female scientists' careers. The most important measures introduced so far in the field of R&D are the following:

(a) The establishment of the UNESCO Chair in Gender Equality and Empowerment by the University of Cyprus in 2009, where research is being conducted and gender mainstreaming activities are being organized to this day;

(b) Research activities undertaken by the Research Centre for Gender Studies of the University of Cyprus, in relation to gender equality and, in particular, the participation of men and women in all walks of life;

(c) In 2012, an interdepartmental interdisciplinary programme was established at the University of Cyprus in Gender Studies, available on a master's (MA) and a doctoral level (PhD);

(d) Development of a Gender Equality Plan for 2014-2020 by the Cyprus University of Technology, which includes, among others, training on promoting gender equality and combating sexual harassment and discrimination;

(e) Inclusion of the issue of gender equality in the National Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, "Restart 2016-2020". Under the programme, the project promoters must comply with relevant laws that relate to equal opportunities between genders and non-discrimination.

Bodies and structures

26. In addition to the NMWR (see Article 3), in the period under review, the following bodies/structures have been instrumental in promoting gender equality.

Commissioner for Gender Equality (CGE)

27. The institution of the CGE was established in 2014 by the President of the Republic with competence to further promote gender equality issues and women's rights in Cyprus.

[see Information provided by Cyprus in follow-up to the Concluding Observations-CEDAW/C/CYP/CO/6-7/Add.1 (hereinafter the "follow-up report").]

Ombudsman/Anti-Discrimination Body and Equality Authority

28. In 2011, the institution was renamed the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights Protection (CAHRP) and it was assigned the functions of protecting, promoting and guaranteeing human rights as the National Institution for the Protection of Human Rights, in line with the Paris Principles.

29. A total of 468 complaints were received by the Equality Body during the period March 2011 to August 2016. Of these, 205 (44%) were submitted by women who claimed discrimination on the basis of gender: 79 cases concerned discrimination related to pregnancy or birth (e.g., maternity allowance or dismissal for being pregnant); 43 cases concerned harassment including sexual harassment; 32 cases concerned work-life balance or discrimination due to family/marital status; 14 cases concerned discrimination because of gender on issues related to recruitment, salary, promotion; and 37 cases concerned other forms of discrimination against women (e.g., sexist comments, complaints from children of refugee mothers, dismissal of women, etc.). (For additional activities of CAHRP, in the period under review, see also pages: 16, 19, and 20). The Anti-Discrimination Body received 7 complaints related to discrimination on the basis of gender, access to goods and services, education and social protection.

The Gender Equality Committee in Employment and Vocational Training (GECEVT)

30. The Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Education (Amendment) Law, 2014 [L.150(I)/2014], has further harmonised the GECEVT's legal framework with Article 19 of the Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and the Council of 5 July 2006.

Equality Inspectors-Department of Labour/MLWSI

31. The Equality Inspectors of the Department of Labour of the MLWSI play an important role in combating gender discrimination in employment. During 2012-2013, officers of the MLWSI, as well as officers of the Ombudsman's Office, received intensive theoretical and on-the-job training on the enforcement of equal pay and equal treatment in employment legislation. During 2015, there were more than 1,000 inspections on equal pay legislation, with the aim to monitor and further reduce the gender pay gap.

Gender Equality Certification Body

32. By decision of the Council of Ministers, the National Certification Body was established in April 2014 as the competent authority for evaluating enterprises on their degree of equal treatment/equal pay "best practices" in the workplace. There are two types of certificates: the 'Equality Employer' certificate; and the "Good Practice" certificate relating to equal treatment and/or equal pay. During 2014, 35 consultants from 12 companies were trained and they provided free consulting services to businesses/organizations that were interested in being certified. During 2015, 34 businesses were certified.

Advisory Committee for the Prevention and Combating of Domestic Violence (ACPCDV)

33. During the period under review, the ACPCDV carried out important initiatives, such as:

(a) The development of the second NAPPCFV (2017-2019), which will be submitted by the MLWSI to the Council of Ministers for approval in March 2017;

(b) The drafting of a proposal for a centralised data collection mechanism to collect and process administrative data on domestic violence, as foreseen by the Istanbul Convention, signed by the Republic of Cyprus on 16 June 2015 (CETS 210);

(c) The amendment and revision of the Manual of Interdepartmental Procedures (MIP);

(d) Undertaking, with the support of the NMWR in 2012, the first national research on the prevalence of domestic violence in Cyprus and its consequences on women's health, entitled "Extent, Frequency, Forms and Consequences of Domestic Violence against Women in Cyprus".

Multidisciplinary Coordinating Group for Combating Human Trafficking

34. It was established in line with the provisions of the combating of Trafficking and Exploitation of Human beings and the Protection of Victims Law, 2007 [L.87/(I)/2007] with the task to take all necessary measures for combating trafficking and exploitation of human beings and to protect the victims.

Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women

35. The Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women was created, by decision of the HOR in 2011, through the consolidation of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and the Parliamentary Committee on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women. It examines law proposals and issues relating to equality and human rights. During its sessions, the Committee frequently invites the CGE and women's organizations to express their opinions on gender equality issues.

Police Committee for Gender Equality (PCGE)

36. The PCGE was established in 2008 following a decision by the Council of Ministers. Its main tasks are the full implementation of legislation on gender equality among the Police, the promotion of equal treatment and the development of a new attitude based on the principle of gender equality. The Committee consists of six senior police officers (three men and three women).

Police Office for Combating Discrimination (POCD)

37. The POCD, established in 2005, is operating at the police headquarters. The Office is responsible for the implementation of preventive initiatives as well as for monitoring intervention tactics to combat racism, discrimination and xenophobia.

Commissioner for the Protection of Children's Rights (CPCR)

38. The CPCR was established in 2007 pursuant to the Commissioner for the Protection of Children's Rights Law, 2007 [L.74(I)/2007], as an independent authority based on the Paris Principles and General Comment No.2 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Law was amended in 2014 [L.44(I)/2014] to facilitate its effectiveness.

Article 3
National Machinery for Women's Rights

39. After the appointment of the CGE in March 2014, the Council of Ministers, following a proposal by the MJPO decided, at its meeting of 23 April 2014 (Decision No. 76.789), to adopt the amendment to the draft of the NMWR organization and operation, so that the Council and the National Committee of the NMWR would be chaired by the CGE, and the General Secretariat would continue to be served by officials of the MJPO belonging to the Gender Equality Unit.

40. The main priority of the NMWR for 2016 was the redesign of equality policies, along with the re-establishment of the Committee for the Participation of Women in Decision-making Centres, the Committee against Violence and Trafficking in Human Beings, the Committee on Employment and Economic Empowerment of Women, the Committee on European Affairs, the Committee on the Elimination of Stereotypes and Social Prejudice and the Bi-communal Cooperation Committee, which are responsible for the implementation of actions arising from the SAPGE 2014-2017. A key priority was the promotion of increased participation of women in decision-making positions, in view of the Parliamentary Elections of 2016.

41. On 2 December 2016, the Office of the CGE and the NMWR organized a seminar on "Gender Equality-2017 Actions", attended by over 80 representatives of women's organizations — trade unions and party organizations, bodies involved in promoting gender equality, professional and social associations, and civil servants. Actions scheduled to be implemented in 2017 were presented, including the following:

(a) A survey on the present situation of women (demographics, economic situation, participation in political and social life and in business) in both communities, the results of which will be presented at a bi-communal event in 2017 (Committee for bi-communal cooperation);

(b) An awareness raising campaign on women workers' rights (Committee on employment and economic empowerment of women);

(c) A workshop on the equal participation of men and women in decision-making centres (Committee on women's participation in decision-making);

(d) Suggestions to the MOEC for improving its current gender equality programmes as well as establishing new ones, such as surveys and studies promoting the gender dimension and eliminating stereotypes and social prejudices (Committee on the elimination of stereotypes and social prejudices);

(e) The Thematic Group "Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Women", under the NMWR's Committee against Violence and Trafficking of Human Beings, worked in 2016 on the design of actions aimed at prevention. In this context, it developed proposals for workshops to reduce the demand for sexual services;

(f) The NMWR Committee on European Issues organized an information seminar on the "National and European Funding Programmes through the Information Portal" in February 2016, which incorporated the theme "The European Union Today: Challenges and Perspectives";

(g) The NMWR Committee against Violence has held various seminars/events to raise awareness in urban and rural areas on the issue. In 2017, the Committee plans to hold seminars, lectures and workshops among university students in Nicosia and Paphos on violence against women and domestic violence, and in Nicosia and Limassol on trafficking of women.

Article 4
Special temporary measures — positive action programmes

42. As part of the Government's policy to support vulnerable social groups, a number of temporary measures have been adopted or continued to be implemented in the period under review:

Scheme for the enhancement of female entrepreneurship

43. Women remain an important target group supported by the Government through the Grant Scheme known as "Scheme for the Enhancement of Women's Entrepreneurship", specially designed to encourage business development. The Ministry of Energy, Commerce, Industry and Tourism will continue to implement the Scheme, which is part of the Strategic Development Plan (2014-2020).

44. The Scheme provides women with substantial financial assistance and training programmes for the creation of new, modern and viable small and medium-size enterprises. Prospective female candidates should have completed their 18th year of age and be no more than 55 years of age on the date of submission of their proposal.

45. The Scheme encompasses all activities in the manufacturing sector excluding those relating to the processing of agricultural products. It also covers all activities in electronic commerce, services and tourism. Successful candidates are entitled to a grant amounting to 50% of the approved budget up to a maximum amount of €70,000 for the manufacturing sector and €50,000 for the remaining selected activities. Each successful candidate is required to complete the submitted project within 24 months from the date of approval. A similar grant scheme is being applied among the youth.

46. In 2015, a total of approximately €4 million was allocated for both programmes, benefitting 190 enterprises and resulting in the creation of about 500 new jobs, while in 2014, the total amount was €3.1 million, benefitting 170 enterprises and resulting in about 400 new jobs being created.

47. In 2015, there was a new call for proposals for both schemes, under the programming period 2014-2020, with a total budget of €11 million. More than 800 proposals were submitted under this call. For the Scheme of Female Entrepreneurship, 113 proposals were successful with a total budget of €3.75 million.

Programmes run by the Cyprus Productivity Centre (CPC)

48. The CPC has run the following programmes/schemes that facilitate, among other things, the access of women to the labour market:

(a) Grant Scheme on Flexible Forms of Employment: The scheme was co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Republic of Cyprus within the framework of the Operational Programme: Employment, Human Resources and Social Cohesion 2007-2013. It subsidised enterprises with 65% of the wage costs of new recruits for a period of 8 months. It aimed at unemployed women, persons over 50 years of age and other vulnerable people. The Scheme started on 22 April 2010 and was completed on 31 August 2015;

(b) Skills Development for Effective Application of the Gender Equality Principle in the Workplace. The programme was aimed at managers of enterprises and it consisted of a 2-day workshop delivered on 23 and 29 November 2016.

Quotas for the participation of women on the boards of semi-government organizations

49. In 2016, a bill was enacted regulating the quotas for the participation of women on the boards of semi-government organizations, to ensure that 30% of either sex will be represented on the Board of Directors, [an amendment of the Certain Legal Entities of Public Law (Appointment of the Board of Directors) Law, 1988 (L. 149/1988)]. This bill has not been promulgated, as the President of the Republic has referred it to the Supreme Court on grounds of unconstitutionality. The judgment of the Court is pending.

New women's wing at the Central Prison

50. In December 2016, a new women's wing was inaugurated by the MJPO. This is part of a project by the MJPO to upgrade and modernise the prisons, which began in December 2014 at a cost of around €700,000.

51. The new wing consists of 20 cells with a capacity for 40 women and is expected to help alleviate overcrowding as well as improve the living conditions of female inmates. It is also expected to provide better possibilities for correction and personal development.

52. In the period under review, the following measures were introduced to further enhance the humane side of the prison system:

(a) Termination of the practice of closed visits and increase of the number of visits and visitors. The glass separating visitors and inmates was removed, and inmates can now have physical contact with their children and family as recommended by the CPCR. All visiting areas are now equipped with a small playground and toys for the children of inmates;

(b) An infant has the right to stay with his/her inmate mother for as long as he/she is breast feeding, or for any period certified by a medical practitioner for medical reasons. The cost for feeding, maintaining and treating infants during their stay in prison is on public funds;

(c) Quality education leading to a school leaving certificate; vocational training offered by the MOEC and other government agencies or professional bodies; physical education and sports delivered through a structured programme of activities under the direction of the Cyprus Sports Organization;

(d) Access to daily telephone calls from 08.00-18.00 hours and use of Skype;

(e) Participation in creative activities, workshops, entertainment and social and charitable events, which are deemed important in the rehabilitation process.

Article 5
Changes in social attitudes — violence against women

53. The NMWR contributes substantially to reforming social attitudes and eliminating gender stereotypes, which are identified as the major obstacles to the advancement of women. This is also one of the six priority areas of the SAPGE (2014-2017), which places particular emphasis on education and the elimination of gender stereotypes through activities under the Chapter on "Elimination of Social Stereotypes and Prejudices", such as the adoption of a Code of Ethics in the Media, research on gender equality issues and the sensitization and training of teachers, parents and students, as well as journalists and policy-makers in the mass media.

54. According to the SAPGE, the media, as a mechanism for social change, is expected to play a key role in cultivating and creating a mentality among the population that is free from stereotypes and social prejudices, through actions that promote and highlight positive contributions from women who are active in political and economic life, while ensuring equal opportunities for men and women.

55. Furthermore, educational campaigns directed at both men and women, in collaboration with civil society and the media, are promoted by the Committee on the Elimination of Gender Stereotypes of the NMWR and the MOEC, which continues to implement the Action Plan for Equality between Women and Men in Education, including measures to overcome traditional roles and gender stereotypes in the family and society.

56. In addition, the MJPO, the NMWR, the CGE, the MOEC, the MIGS and the IMH Business are implementing the European programme entitled: "Breaking the Mould: Promoting Gender Equality in Cyprus". The programme is of a two-year duration (2016-2018), and was funded by the European Commission. Its objectives include the promotion of flexible working arrangements for men in Cyprus, and encouraging companies and particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to implement simple, family-friendly measures. Moreover, the project aims to change the stereotype that domestic work is not a masculine role.

Violence against women

57. The first nationwide survey[1] conducted in Cyprus in 2012 revealed that at least 28% of women in Cyprus have experienced some form of domestic violence: physical, sexual, social, economic or psychological.

58. Preventing and combating violence of any form and particularly violence against women is of high priority of the Government. In this regard, important developments have been implemented during the period under review:

Legislative measures

59. Cyprus signed the Istanbul Convention on 16 June 2015, following a Council of Ministers decision dated 2 April 2015. This was the outcome of a thorough study prepared by the Technical Committee on Gender Equality, assisting the Ministerial Committee in its work, which examined the obligations of the State under the Convention, as well as the cost for their implementation.

60. The MJPO, in order to pave the way for the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, promoted, inter alia, the following measures:

(a) A bill entitled The Protection from Harassment and Stalking and other Related Issues Law, criminalising harassment and stalking has been prepared, in accordance with Article 34 of the Istanbul Convention and is due to be enacted;

(b) In 2016, the services of an external expert to prepare a study on the modifications needed to the national legislative framework in order to comply with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention, and a study on the Assessment and Management of Risk, in accordance with Article 51 of the Convention, were secured. The two studies have been completed and submitted to the Ministry and were timely disseminated and posted to the website of the MJPO. At present, a new bill combating violence against women and girls has been drafted and is due for public consultation;

(c) Enactment of the Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) (Amendment) Law, 2015 [L.172(I)/2015];

(d) Enactment of the Prevention and Combating of Sexual Abuse, Sexual Exploitation of Children and Child Pornography Law, 2014 [L.91(I)/2014], transposing Directive 2011/93/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on Combating Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation of Children, and Child Pornography, replacing the Council Framework-Decision 2004/68/JHA;

[1] Apostolidou, M., Maurice, P., Parlalis, St. (2012), *Extent, Frequency, Nature and Consequences of Domestic Violence against Women in Cyprus*. Commissioned by the ACPCDV and funded by the NMWR. The executive summary of the survey is available at: http://www.familyviolence.gov.cy/upload/research/erevna_2012oct_viol-ag-women_summary_en.pdf.

(e) Enactment of the Establishing Minimum Standards on the Rights, Support and Protection of Victims of Crime Law, 2016 [L.51(I)/2016], transposing Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 replacing Council Framework Decision 2001/22/JHA. The purpose of the Law is to enhance the protection of the victim both in terms of procedural rights and in terms of physical and practical protection of anyone considered a victim including female victims of gender-based violence.

Action plan

61. The ACPCDV has drafted the second NAPPHFV (2017-2019), which will be submitted by the MLWSI to the Council of Ministers for approval. The new NAPPHFV focuses on the following objectives:

(a) Completing the revision of the Manual of Interdepartmental Procedures;

(b) Promoting systematic, specialised and interdepartmental training for "front-line" professionals dealing with incidents/cases of domestic violence;

(c) Reinstating Family Counsellors within the Social Welfare Services (SWS);

(d) Development and adoption of a multi-agency Risk Assessment Mechanism for more effective management of incidents/cases of domestic violence;

(e) Promoting the ratification of the Istanbul Convention by the HOR;

(f) Promoting the effective implementation of the Establishing Minimum Standards on the Rights, Support and Protection of Victims of Crime Law, 2016 [L.51(I)/2016].

62. Moreover, the NMWR, in its efforts to combat effectively all forms of VAW, secured the services of an external consultant to evaluate the implementation of the previous NAPGE (2007-2010). According to an Interim Report, significant progress has been made in all relevant areas.

Awareness-raising/training of professionals

63. In 2013-2014 and 2015-2016, the APHFV, in collaboration with the MOEC and the CPCR, organized several national campaigns aimed at raising awareness among teachers and parents on combating domestic violence, and on promoting positive parenting.

64. Further, the Office of the CAHRP, the MIGS, the Cyprus Academy of Public Administration (CAPA) and the ACPCDV have completed a two-year European project known as the "Campaign on Zero Tolerance of Violence against Women and Girls in Cyprus" (2013-2015). Through promoting a message of zero tolerance, the project aimed at awareness-raising, as well as enabling participants to respond more effectively to the needs of victims of violence.

65. In April 2016, the MJPO in cooperation with the ACPCDV and the American Embassy, organized a seminar on VAW, which was addressed to professionals of all relevant ministries/agencies involved in handling domestic violence cases. The trainers of the seminar were experts on domestic and sexual violence issues.

66. In November 2012, the Gender Equality Unit of the MJPO, with the support of the European Commission, organized a two-day conference on Combating Domestic Violence against Women in the EU, in the framework of the Cyprus Presidency of the European Council (June-December 2012) (hereinafter the Cyprus Presidency). The aim of the conference was to review progress at the EU level on preventing and

on combating domestic violence against women and to provide a forum for the exchange of good practices and lessons learned in the Member States.

67. In November 2013, the ACPCDV organized a Pancyprian Conference on "Domestic Violence: prevention, protection and prosecution" in Nicosia, which aimed to review progress at the EU level on preventing and combating domestic violence towards women and children, providing a forum for the exchange of good practices and lessons learned in other EU member states. The conference, which was funded by the NMWR, brought together 140 professionals and NGOs.

68. In the period under review, the issue of domestic violence was given high priority by the police and several activities were held:

(a) Police Academy: The issue of combating domestic violence is part of the training programmes of the Police Academy; seminars and workshops are offered to police personnel. Special emphasis is given on the handling and investigation of cases involving minors or other vulnerable persons as victims;

(b) EU police handbook of good practice of overcoming attrition in domestic violence cases. The handbook was the outcome of a conference of experts during the Cyprus Presidency. It highlights the main strategies and approaches that have been applied in overcoming attrition and underlines the principles and elements of success in intervention programmes;

(c) Participation in the Leonardo Programme. The police participated as a partner, during 2012-2014, in the Leonardo Programme "Standardised tools of domestic violence risk assessment — strengthening the professional capacity of European Police Officers", which aimed to produce an informational booklet for police officers in Europe on risk assessment;

(d) The Cyprus Police submitted a project entitled "Circle of CHANGE: Preventing and combating violence against women and girls through gender equality awareness" which was accepted for financing by the European Commission. The police are in charge of the coordination of all national stakeholders. The programme is of two years' duration (2017-2019) with a total cost of €177,000. The main objectives of the programme are: changing attitudes and behaviours towards violence against women; prevention through education; combating victim-blaming and encouraging victims and witnesses to report violence to the authorities and institutions by increasing their sense of trust; contributing to challenging sexism, gender stereotyping and gender norms in younger age groups; informing groups of citizens, who are at risk of violence, of their rights and about government support services.

69. In the context of the negotiations for a settlement of the Cyprus problem, the Technical Committee on Humanitarian Matters established, in 2008, the bi-communal Sub-Committee on Domestic Violence, with the aim of combating domestic violence throughout the island. The Sub-Committee, composed of experts from both communities (psychologists, psychiatrists, family-law specialists), has agreed on a series of steps for raising awareness throughout Cyprus.

70. In the period under review, the Technical Committee for Humanitarian Matters and the Technical Committee on Crime and Criminal Matters hosted a Conference in Nicosia, entitled "Domestic Violence: The emphasis on prevention" on 20 May 2015. The speakers included members of the Greek and Turkish Cypriot Teams, UNFICYP personnel and other professionals.

71. A second conference entitled "Human trafficking: Building an effective anti-trafficking system by focusing on protection of victims" was hosted by the Technical Committee for Humanitarian Matters in Nicosia on 17 February 2017.

The speakers were the Greek-Cypriot Team Leader, the Turkish-Cypriot Team Leader, UNFICYP personnel, activists and professionals.

Assistance and protection for female victims of violence

72. In September 2014, the APHFV inaugurated a shelter for victims of domestic violence in Paphos. Another shelter was inaugurated in September 2016, in Nicosia, replacing a previous one operated in rented premises. It was co-funded by the Norway Grants programme (75%), the Cyprus Government, OPAP and APHFV. The shelter provides 21 beds for female victims of domestic violence and their children.

73. The SWS of the MLWSI, through the Grants-In-Aid Scheme, provide financial support to the APHFV for the operation of the shelters. APHFV is also operating the telephone helpline 1440 which, as of January 2017, is operating on a 24-hour basis, in compliance with the Istanbul Convention, with the financial support of the MJPO.

74. All officers of the SWS have additionally been assigned duties as family counsellors, who can handle and investigate complaints of domestic violence. To encourage people to report cases of VAW, family counsellors accept anonymous referrals. In cases where women want to leave abusive relationships, they can stay with their children at APHFV shelters until they can support themselves and become financially independent.

Data collection system

75. A proposal drafted by the ACPCDV regarding the implementation of a centralised data collection mechanism for collecting and processing administrative data on domestic violence pursuant to the Istanbul Convention and the Victims' Rights Directive is ready for submission to the Council of Ministers.

76. Moreover, a research department was established within ACPCDV in October 2013, which is currently operated by an academic senior researcher and four volunteer researchers — all of whom are experts in research methods or psychology. This research department analyses the ACPCDV database and collects data from the Helpline, shelters and psychological/counselling meetings for ACPCDV's presentations in social media and for other purposes. Court reports are also prepared by the ACPCDV research department on request.

Research

77. Further to a nationwide survey conducted in 2012 (mentioned above in this Article), a number of other research activities have been undertaken in relation to sexual violence in the period under review.

78. Within its competence as the National Human Rights Institution, the CAHRP issued various reports on the matter, e.g.:

(a) A report on the lack of structures for support of victims of sexual violence;

(b) A report on the prevention and penal system handling of sexual violence against women;

(c) A report on the necessity of drafting a national strategy on prevention and management of sexual crime.

Article 6
Trafficking in women, exploitation and prostitution of women

79. Since 2011, the effort to prevent and combat trafficking has been intensified; using research projects, legislative reforms, APs and a number of other measures (see also follow-up report).

80. During the same period, several trainings, public discussions and events were organized by the CAHRP Office regarding the issue of human trafficking and labour exploitation, e.g.:

(a) A discussion on the creation of an alliance among different stakeholders for the prevention of human trafficking and labour exploitation;

(b) An event open to the public to discuss the recommendations of the GRETA (Group of Experts on Action against trafficking in human beings) Report;

(c) A conference organized for senior officers on the role of the public authorities in the prevention and combating of human trafficking;

(d) Training programmes for educators and students held at schools.

81. Amongst others, the CAHRP issued a report A/N 4/2013, dated 17 October 2013 and addressed to all competent authorities and NGOs, concerning the anti-trafficking framework and its possible deficiencies.

82. Due regard is given to the effective enforcement of the existing legislation and, in particular, investigation of acts of trafficking and the prosecution and punishment of perpetrators. Since March 2015, the role and competences of the POCTHB have been expanded. Specialised investigators have joined existing staff, undertaking tasks within an upgraded framework.

83. The empowerment of the POCTHB is aimed at providing qualitative, proper and in-depth investigation of trafficking cases by the police, as well as improving the operational abilities of the police. Since its expansion, the number of convictions has increased. In 2014, 14 persons were convicted under the provisions of the Anti-Trafficking Law, while in 2015 the number of convicted persons rose to 21.

84. The efforts of Cyprus to combat trafficking have been recognised and honoured. The female head of the POCTHB was among nine persons from around the globe who were honoured as "A trafficking in persons 2016 Hero" by the US Secretary of State in June 2016. As a result, Cyprus was moved to the highest level of Tier 1 in recognition of the government's efforts to combat human trafficking.

85. Meanwhile, the competent authorities cooperate within this framework to ensure that victims have access to their rights and get the necessary assistance and protection. To this end, the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) manual has been published. The Ministry of Interior is organising a series of trainings on the NRM addressing front-line officers, e.g. migration officers, the police, medical staff, labour relations officers, etc. Each competent authority is also responsible for providing staff training on its competencies as regards human trafficking and on the NRM manual.

86. All victims of human trafficking, including male victims and victims of labour trafficking, have access to all the services provided to victims of trafficking. On the island, there is one state shelter for victims of trafficking. However, there is a provision in the SAPGE (2014-2017) for a second one. Some 23 victims of sexual exploitation were accommodated in the shelter during 2014 and another 23 in 2015.

87. The SWS informs the victims of their rights and options regarding accommodation, financial assistance and medical care. Also, an evaluation is performed regarding their needs and, if necessary, they are referred to the appropriate departments or NGOs for further support and assistance.

88. Until July 2014, the SWS provided financial support to male victims of trafficking, as well as to female victims who did not wish to stay in the state shelter, which included a component for accommodation expenses. This practice changed in July 2014 with the enactment of the Minimum Guaranteed Income Law, 2014 [L.109(I)/2014], according to which victims of trafficking are eligible for a guaranteed minimum income on top of which support for accommodation cost is added.

89. Further to the NAPATHB 2010-2012 and NAPATHB 2013-2015 (see follow-up report), prevention of violence and trafficking against women has been set as one of the milestones of the SAPGE 2014-2017. In this framework, the Thematic Group "Trafficking and sexual exploitation of women" (hereafter Thematic Group), under the NMWR Committee against Violence and Trafficking of Persons, worked in 2016 on designing actions aimed at prevention.

90. Demand for sexual services is a key factor fuelling trafficking. To reduce demand for sexual services the Thematic Group formulated proposals for workshops. After consulting academic institutions, the group designed a series of workshops to raise awareness among university students on the issue of trafficking. The first cycle of the workshops is scheduled to commence in January 2017 and to end with the academic year 2016-2017. The attitudes and behaviour of students towards the issue of trafficking and sexual services will be evaluated both prior to and after the completion of each workshop.

Article 7
Political and public life

The present situation

91. Despite the increasing number of women actively involved in political and public life, women are still underrepresented in important decision-making positions such as the Government, the HOR, and Municipal and Community Councils.

92. However, in the period under review, a positive development was the appointment of women by the President of the Republic to a number of high-ranking posts: Law Commissioner and Commissioner for Children's Rights; Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights; Equality Commissioner; Commissioner for the Environment; Commissioner for the Protection of Personal Data. Women also hold the posts of the Accountant-General of the Republic and the Governor of the Central Bank.

93. Women have also been appointed as the Chairpersons of the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Commission for the Protection of Competition as well as to the Boards of the following semi-government organizations: the Cyprus Telecommunication Authority, the Board of Loan Commissioners and the Cyprus Forest Industries.

94. Women serve as Vice-Chairpersons on the Boards of the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation, the Housing Finance Corporation and the Council for Registration and Control of Building and Civil Engineering Contractors.

95. However, there is only one woman out of 11 Ministers in the Council of Ministers, the Minister of LWSI, and only one woman out of five members on the

Education Service Commission, while there are no women on the Public Service Commission.

96. In Cyprus, there had been no women judges until 1986. Since then, their number has been steadily increasing, reaching 44.3% in 2011, 43.6% in 2013 and nearly 50% in 2016: the total number of women judges of the Cyprus Judiciary is 54 out of 111. There were also five women out of 13 (38.5%) judges in the Supreme Court in 2016.

97. The proportion of women senior civil servants has increased from 13.5% in 2000 to 32.7% in 2011 and 37.3% in 2013. There are also three women out of 11 Permanent Secretaries of Ministries (27.3%) and 15 women out of 39 Heads of Department/Services of Ministries (38.5%).

98. The percentage of women in the HOR was 17.86% (10 out of 56) in 2016, showing an increasing trend as compared to 12.5% in 2009, 10.7% in 2001 and 5.4% in 1991.

99. Women's participation in Municipal Councils has also gradually increased, but remains poor. Based on the Municipal Elections of 18 December 2016, only four women were elected mayors out of a total of 39 (10.26%) and 88 women were elected members of the Municipal Councils out of 1891 (4.65%). Some 21 women were elected heads/presidents of Village/Community Councils out of 256 (8.2%), 209 women out of 1407 (14.85%) were elected members of the Village/Community Councils; and 99 women out of 219 (45.2%) were elected members of the School Boards.

100. As regards the European Parliament, there is only one woman out of six members of the European Parliament from Cyprus.

Measures and actions taken

101. Various measures have been taken to improve the balance of women and men in decision-making positions in public and political life, such as awareness-raising campaigns with the broad participation of women's organizations; meetings and contacts with political parties and media organizations; dissemination of informational material about the professional profiles of the female parliamentary candidates, which was prepared by the NMWR, and exchange of good practices through conferences and seminars.

102. One of these events, which was partly funded by the NMWR, was the national research project entitled "Parliamentary Elections 2006 & 2016: The gender preferences of the Cypriot voters" carried out as an exit poll on the day of the Parliamentary Elections (in 2006 and 2016) by the UNESCO Chair for Gender Equality and Empowerment of the University of Cyprus and the Cyprus Gender Research Centre (CGRC). The project mainly aimed to highlight the degree of change in stereotypical attitudes and preferences of Cypriot society towards women candidates and political decision-making positions in the decade 2006-2016. The findings were presented publicly on 20 November 2016 and disseminated to the government authorities, political parties, academic institutions and NGOs.

Women and peace

103. In the framework of the ongoing negotiations on the Cyprus problem, a bi-communal Technical Committee on Gender Equality (TCGE) was established in August 2016, with the mandate to "look into the gender perspective of how life in Cyprus is affected as a result of the status quo". In this respect the TCGE is expected to bring gender-related issues to the forefront and, in accordance with

UNSCR 1325, submit recommendations and suggestions on how to better integrate the gender perspective in a future settlement.

104. The UN Secretary-General commended the initiative as constituting a positive step towards increasing the participation of women and the inclusion of the gender perspective in the negotiations. He also positively noted in his reports the concrete steps undertaken to increase the number of women directly involved in the talks as members of the negotiating teams or as members of the working groups of experts, often in leading positions.

105. Further to contributing to the negotiation process, the TCGE organized a number of gender-related activities, such as:

(a) A panel discussion on 10 March 2016 (to mark International Women's Day) on how women are better at building peace, which was facilitated by UNFICYP and the UN Good Offices Mission in Cyprus;

(b) Meeting the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) Regional Director for Europe and Central Asia during her visit to Cyprus on 5 and 6 May 2016;

(c) A conference, organized in November 2016, entitled "Pathways towards Sustainable Peace: Building UNSC Resolution 1325 into the Cyprus Context", that brought together female experts in politics and in civil society issues from over 25 island-wide CSOs.

Article 8
Representation at the international level

(see previous report)

Article 9
Nationality

(see previous report)

Article 10
Education

106. The education indicators in Cyprus are very good, with high rates of participation at all levels of education. In the academic year 2014-2015, the percentages of female enrolment were: 48.9% in pre-primary education; 48.8% in primary education; 48.4% in lower secondary education; 54.4% in upper secondary general education; 21.8% in upper secondary technical education; and 56.8% in tertiary education.

107. Gender segregation does exist in technical education as the data above indicate, with female enrolment constituting only 21.8% of total enrolment. The same situation exists, to some extent, in certain fields of study within tertiary education as the following figures show (for the academic year 2013-2014); the percentage of females enrolled in Humanities was 78.8%; the Arts (65.7%); Engineering (16.3%); Manufacturing and Processing (50.0%); and Architecture and Civil Engineering (46.7%).

108. One of the main objectives of the SAPGE (2014-2017) is to eliminate gender stereotyping and gender bias in job selection, as these prejudices are considered largely responsible for women's unemployment and limited job choices. Education

and the media can play a crucial role in changing this. In line with this view, the MOEC has drafted an Action Plan in Education (2014-2017), which focuses on eliminating gender stereotypes in education.

109. With regard to education, there are no barriers faced by girls belonging to ethnic minorities, including Turkish Cypriot girls (although Turkish Cypriots are not considered an ethnic minority but are one of the two Communities of the State provided by the Constitution), since everyone is entitled to the right of education without any discrimination based on gender or ethnic origin. The MOEC is focused on ensuring equal opportunities in education for both genders on a non-discriminatory basis at all levels of education. A Committee was established to oversee and coordinate all gender equality issues related to actions taken. Its work has resulted in the development of an Action Plan which promotes gender equality (2014-2017), targeting to the inclusion of gender equality in matters related to the structures of the educational system and to the teacher in-service training. Examples of the implementation of the Action Plan are given below:

(a) Training courses aiming to raise awareness on gender issues related to the gap between men and women in labour targeting to all teachers in primary and secondary education, all career counsellors in secondary education and all inspectors in primary and secondary education (Pedagogical Institute, Career Counselling and Educational Service and Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance);

(b) Training of teachers and parents on issues related to gender, through school-based training seminars and programmes (Pedagogical Institute);

(c) Workshops for teachers in primary and secondary education (Pedagogical Institute and the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies);

(d) Conducting surveys on the needs and aspirations of women of diverse cultural background and of their children and creating educational/professional structures aimed at providing language skills and professional orientation (Pedagogical Institute and State Institutes of Further Education);

(e) In-service training of teachers on issues related to prevention and combating delinquency with reference to transgender relationships (Directorates of Education and Pedagogical Institute);

(f) Organizing conferences/seminars on gender issues for teachers of all levels (Pedagogical Institute);

(g) Implementing programmes in schools with the aim of promoting gender equality and respect among all children in class, irrespective of their background or gender (Educational Psychology Service);

(h) Workshops for teachers and pupils aiming at the promotion of equality and inclusion (Career Counselling and Educational Service).

110. Moreover, in an effort to provide easy access to relevant material and good practices for an education on Gender Equality, the Pedagogical Institute has launched a webpage dedicated to Gender Equality, which includes useful information, bibliography and material that teachers can use to ensure equal opportunities of both genders in the learning process. Furthermore, an essay competition on Gender Equality between pupils of the 11th grade was organized. The goal of "Cultivating active citizenship with emphasis on social solidarity" became under emphasis and actions to eliminate all forms of stereotyping in the educational process were developed.

111. The Council of Ministers have decided in principle to establish a school in Limassol with Turkish as the language of instruction. However, a survey conducted

in 2005 among Turkish Cypriot parents on this proposal, indicated that parents favoured attendance at a public school of their area. For this, the decision of the Council of Ministers was not implemented.

AP in Education (2014-2017)

112. Within its competences and in cooperation with the MJPO and the MLWSI, the MOEC has formulated an AP to contribute to the full implementation of the measures suggested by the SAPGE (2014-2017). The main objective of the new AP is to include the gender equality principle in matters relating to: the structure of the educational system; teachers' in-service training; and empowerment of the family.

113. Due regard is given to the assessment of the impact of the measures undertaken within the framework of the AP. In relation to this, a steering committee appointed by the Permanent Secretary of the MOEC is monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the measures and, accordingly, is revising and updating the AP each year.

114. In line with the objectives of the AP and the Concluding Observations, several measures have been applied, including:

(a) Implementation of the Health Education Curriculum addressing issues in the areas of: inter-personal relations; accepting, respecting and managing diversity; family planning and sexual/reproductive health; confronting prejudice; and working against stereotypes, social exclusion and racism;

(b) Health promotion programmes, of which there are many carried out every year supported by funds from the Coordinating Committee of Health Education and Citizenship with the aim to help remove economic, linguistic and cultural barriers for children;

(c) Awareness-raising of male/female dominated occupations and promoting diversification of women's academic and professional choices. The MOEC, in collaboration with the MLWSI, has implemented a programme for encouraging increased female participation in technical fields and the use of new technologies, by restructuring secondary technical/vocational education to make it more attractive to male and female students. Furthermore, every year during "career week", presentations on male/female-dominated occupations are given by professionals at gymnasiums and lyceums. It is worth mentioning that within this framework every year the National Guard offers information to both male and female students on how to achieve a military career in the Armed Forces;

(d) Art and essay contests aiming to raise student awareness of equal opportunities in the workplace. The contests, organized by the Pedagogical Institute in collaboration with the GECEVT and the Directorates of primary and secondary education, emphazise equality for men and women in their choice of occupation or profession;

(e) Training courses on gender equality issues and elimination of stereotypes. The Pedagogical Institute, in cooperation with the Career Counselling and Educational Services of the MOEC and the MLWSI, offers courses every year to teachers, inspectors, career counsellors and parents on issues such as the labour/pay gap, active citizenship, multiculturalism, social inclusion/exclusion, identities and relationships between girls and boys;

(f) Code of Conduct for Racism & Guide for Managing and Reporting Racist Incidents. Following a recommendation by the Anti-Discrimination Body of the Ombudsman's Office, the MOEC has drafted the Code and Guide, providing schools with a detailed plan on how to deal with and prevent racism;

(g) Participation in project schemes. The MOEC participates as a partner in European projects which, inter alia, promote gender equality issues. These projects include: the project scheme entitled "Cultural diversity, body, gender, health in early childhood education" (2015-2017); and the pilot project scheme entitled "Human Rights and Democracy in Action" (2014-2015);

Article 11
Employment

Employment-unemployment rate

115. The extensive economic crisis that started in 2008 in Cyprus had a direct negative impact on employment levels in Cyprus as well as the level of welfare of its people. The Eurogroup's decision of 15 March 2013 on the "bail-in" of deposits deteriorated the access to finance and cash flow shortages that Cypriot companies were already facing. Because of a protracted slowdown in economic activity, the unemployment rate increased from 5.4% in 2009 to unprecedented levels of 15.9% in 2013 and 16.1% in 2014. In 2015, total unemployment as well as youth unemployment started to decrease: the unemployment rate fell to 14.9%, while the youth unemployment rate dropped to 32.8% from 38.9% in 2013 and 35.9% in 2014.

116. In its efforts to tackle unemployment, Cyprus has focused on improving its Active Labour Market Policies and modernising and enhancing its Public Employment Services (PES).

117. More specifically, several activation schemes were introduced to tackle unemployment and increase labour market participation. The adopted approach was to introduce measures along three pillars: new job creation (mainly through subsidised employment schemes); job retention (mainly through training schemes targeting the employed); and improving the employability of the unemployed (mainly through training/work experience schemes) with the aim to facilitate their entry into/return to employment.

118. The measures introduced were initially targeted at the unemployed in general, aiming to facilitate their entry into/return to employment as quickly as possible but were gradually expanded to specific groups as well, such as the young, women, the long-term unemployed, the disabled and the vulnerable.

119. With the aim to address the high level of unemployment in Cyprus, the NAPYE was approved by the Council of Ministers at the end of 2014. This Plan combines measures targeting young individuals aged 15-29 who face multiple barriers to labour market integration and are exposed to longer periods of unemployment.

120. As regards the implementation of the project "Further enhancement and modernization of PES", which is co-funded by the ESF, the following actions have been taken:

(a) Strengthening the administrative and technical capacity of PES;

(b) Strengthening the operation of PES through the creation of an Operational Unit of Employment Counsellors (purchase of services) that offers personalized guidance services to the unemployed;

(c) Funding of the PES structure operation.

Women and economic activity

121. The deterioration of the labour market since the start of the economic crisis has affected men and women differently. Unemployment has increased slightly less among women than among men while the decrease in employment of women has been significantly less than that of men.

122. Between 2009 and 2015, the unemployment rate among women increased by 9.3 percentage points (pp), reaching 14.8% in 2015 from 5.5% in 2009 while unemployment among men increased by 9.7 pp, reaching 15.0% in 2015 from 5.3% in 2009. Meanwhile, the employment rate decreased by 3.3 pp among women to 59.0% in 2015, from 62.3% in 2009, while the employment rate among men decreased by 9.6 pp to 66.7%, from 76.3% in 2009. This is due to the sectoral distribution of male-female employment, with women concentrated mostly in the services sector, which is traditionally less cyclical and has fewer job losses, and men mainly in industry and construction, both of which have had the highest job losses.

123. In 2015, the female employment rate (59.0%) was still lower than the male employment rate (66.7%). The gender gap decreased to 7.7 percentage points (pp) from 14 pp in 2009 (the female employment rate was 62.3% and the male employment rate was 76.3%).

124. The difference between male and female employment rates appeared to be significantly smaller amongst the younger age group of 15-24 years in 2015, at 2.8 pp favouring women, while this gap increased to 18.3 pp favouring men in the age group 55-64, and 7.9 pp in the age group 25-54.

125. The continuous increase in the educational level of both male and female workers resulted in a rising share of employment in higher-skilled occupations, such as managers, professionals and technicians, in total employment. In 2015, the employment share in these occupations increased to 35.2% of total employment (35.7% of male and 34.6% of female employment). In 2009, employment in these occupations accounted for 31.4% of the total employment (32.8% of male and 29.8% of female employment).

126. Female employment in higher-skilled occupations accounted for 48% of all those working in these occupations in 2015, as compared to 43% in 2009 and 2004.

127. The educational level of the workforce has risen considerably over this period, with the share of those employed with a tertiary education reaching 44.9% in 2015, from 36.5% in 2009. The number of employed women with a tertiary education as a percentage of total female employment reached 50.3% in 2015, from 42.1% in 2009.

128. Temporary work has increased in recent years. From 10% of total employment in 2002, it rose to 18.3% in 2015. Temporary employment was higher amongst the female employed population where, in 2015, 23.3% of employed women were working on a temporary basis, compared to 3.2% of the male employed population.

129. Flexible forms of employment have also increased in recent years. In particular, part-time employment accounted for 13.8% of total employment in 2015, compared to 8.4% in 2009. Part-time employment was higher amongst the female employed population, rising to 16.5% in 2015 from 12.5% in 2009, while the respective percentages for males were 11.2% in 2015 and 5.2% in 2009.

130. In 2015, self-employment decreased considerably to constitute 14.9% of total employment. Self-employment appeared to be more common among men as it accounted for 18.1% of total male employment compared to the corresponding

proportion for women of 11.6%. In 2009, self-employment accounted for 20% of total employment, which represented 25% of total male employment and 14% of total female employment.

Gender pay gap

131. According to EUROSTAT official data, the gender pay gap in Cyprus declined to 15.8% in 2013, compared to 16.2% in 2012 and 16.4% in 2011. Within the period under review, the Government of the Republic of Cyprus intensified its efforts on bridging the pay gap.

132. By the end of 2015, the MLWSI completed the implementation of the co-financed European Social Fund project "Actions for reducing the gender pay gap", which started in July 2010.

133. The Project consisted of a broad mix of measures aiming to combat the root causes of the gender pay gap and involved various target groups, such as officers and inspectors of equal pay and equal treatment in employment legislation; career advice professionals; primary and secondary education teachers; parents; enterprises; social partners; and society in general. The main actions/developments that were taken included:

(a) Improvement of inspection mechanisms: During 2012-2013, officers of the MLWSI and officers of the Ombudsman Office received intensive theoretical and on-the-job training on the enforcement of equal pay and equal treatment in employment legislation. During 2015, there were more than 1000 inspections on equal pay legislation, aiming to monitor and further reduce the gender pay gap;

(b) Establishment of a Gender Pay Gap Certification Body: In April 2014, the National Certification Body was established by decision of the Council of Ministers to evaluate enterprises on the incorporation/implementation of best practices pertaining to equal treatment/pay principles. In 2014, 35 consultants from 12 companies were trained and in turn provided free consulting services to businesses/organizations that were interested to be certified by the National Business Certification Body. In 2015, 34 businesses were certified by the National Certification Body and another six were certified in 2016;

(c) Awareness-raising training programmes: This action focused on eliminating occupational and sectoral gender segregation and was implemented in the period 2013-2015. This involved training programmes for primary and secondary education teachers, career counsellors and parents;

(d) Tripartite Conference on the exchange of best practices regarding equal pay between member states of the EU: A Tripartite Conference was organized on 29 and 30 of October 2012 (during the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU) for the exchange of good practices between the member states, on how to reduce the gender pay gap. The participants included government officials, trade unions and employer organization representatives. The discussions were organized around four sections: occupational segregation; job evaluation systems and payroll; sanctions; and the relationship between social dialogue and equal pay;

(e) Examination of collective agreements: During 2013, all collective agreements in Cyprus were examined to identify any discrimination regarding pay;

(f) Specialized training of members of trade unions and employers' associations and members of professional associations. This included training programmes for members of trade unions, employers' associations and professional associations, and development of manuals, guides, self-assessment tools, codes of

practice and job evaluation tools for managers/human resources professionals. The training programmes were implemented in 2014;

(g) Equal Pay Day: In March 2013 and 2015 and in November 2016, a celebration event was held on Equal Pay Day, the aim of which was to raise awareness of the pay gap between men and women. This event will continue to be held annually;

(h) Guide for employers and consultation services for employers: This involved the preparation of a guide for employers which included, among other things, an explanation of the provisions of the Protection of Wages Law and the Equal Pay between Men and Women for the Same Work or for Work to which Equal Value is Attributed Law. Consultants appointed by the Department of Labour Relations visited 409 businesses with more than 15 employees each, where they presented the basic provisions of these laws and the employers' guide. The guide was also sent to 1300 companies/organizations/trade unions and employer organizations.

Article 12
Health and HIV/AIDS

134. The Ministry of Health offers Medical and Public Health Services based on the principle that all persons are entitled to health rights without discrimination of any kind, as to race, colour, sex, ethnicity, age, religion, national or social origin, disability, property, or any other status.

135. The Safeguarding and Protection of Patients' Rights Law, 2005 [L.1(I)/2005] safeguards patients' rights, as well as provides equal access to all health services to all persons, including minorities, asylum seekers or illegal immigrants.

136. The Law provides for the monitoring of its implementation by the Health Care System, both private and public, through a Complaints Examination Committee in every district. All public health policies, strategic plans and APs respect people's right to health, especially vulnerable groups.

137. The Ministry of Health has developed a Strategic Plan (SP) (2016-2018), which provides for the development and implementation of national programmes targeting specific vulnerable/age groups, i.e.:

(a) Reactivation of the Consultative Committee for the Prevention of Childhood Accidents and Poisoning with the mandate to prepare a new AP;

(b) Development of a strategic plan for combating violence against children;

(c) Development of a strategy for the promotion of children's rights in relation to health;

(d) Supporting the promotion of breastfeeding, which is already being implemented;

(e) Completion of a review of the capacities of Immigrant Health in Cyprus and preparation of a relevant strategy, according to the needs.

138. The NAP, entitled "Minimising the Consequences of the Economic Crisis in Public Healthcare" (2013-2015), addressing the needs of vulnerable groups, has been successfully implemented as a bridge to the National Health Insurance System.

139. The National Health Insurance System is expected to be implemented according to the following specific roadmap:

(a) June 2017: Autonomy of the Public Health Hospitals/Conversion into independent public law entities;

(b) 2019: Implementation of primary health care nationwide;

(c) 2020: Full implementation of the National Health System.

140. Several programmes for women have been implemented:

(a) VAW: The Ministry of Health has developed a protocol, especially designed for female rape victims, to safeguard optimum health care and the dignity of the victim. Since 2012, the protocol has been applied as a pilot at Famagusta Public Hospital and, starting from this year, the programme is being implemented nationwide;

(b) HPV vaccination: The HPV vaccination has been introduced for free to girls of a certain age group through the School Health Services. Those eligible for the programme are girls attending public and private schools who were born between 1 January 2003 and 31 December 2004. The programme is complemented by a series of lectures on topics related to reproductive issues, contraception and information on HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases;

(c) Breast Centre: A breast unit has been operating in the Nicosia General Hospital since 2010. Starting from 2013, the unit also participated in the EUSOMA network. In November 2014, the Council of Ministers appointed an ad hoc Committee with the mandate to prepare a proposal on the development of a Breast Centre based on European standards. The Council of Ministers subsequently approved the establishment of the Breast Centre on 16 February 2016. The Council of Ministers also appointed a Steering Committee to coordinate the required actions and procedures for operation of the Centre. The Centre is now fully functional.

141. The following programmes and services are also offered to women:

(a) Infancy: Free vaccines are offered to all infant children. Children in rural areas also have the option to be weighed/measured once a week. Mothers are given breastfeeding advice and health visitors go to homes free of charge;

(b) Girls at puberty: School health services offer a lecture series designed to inform girls of about 12 years of age about puberty issues (menstrual circle, secondary sexual characteristics, etc.). Programmes to prevent smoking (experiential learning, drama, puzzles) are also offered to girls in that age group;

(c) Women in childbearing years: In each rural health centre, health visitors provide services on family planning and maternity issues once a week. Local authorities, in partnership with local NGOs and the rural health centres, organize lectures on health education, nutrition, and healthy lifestyles, as well as lectures especially designed for women, including issues such as pregnancy, menopause, female genital mutilation, postpartum depression, etc. A number of municipalities/communities, in partnership with NGOs, provide free access to mammography centres for breast cancer screening;

(d) Elderly women/women with disabilities: Women aged over 63 or with limited ability to travel receive nursing care at home. The community cares about their diet, which is controlled by a clinical dietician or a public doctor. Community nursing homes offer free medical care when needed. In 17 out of the 29 health centres throughout Cyprus, only female doctors, nurses and health visitors are employed.

Unsafe abortions

142. The Concluding Observations raised the issue of unsafe abortions and recommended that a survey be conducted. However, it was not possible to contact such a survey, due to the lack of legislation on mandatory reporting of abortions, as well as the lack of willingness on the part of women to talk on such sensitive personal issues. It must be noted that the maternal mortality rate for Cyprus is one of the lowest in the world, with the cumulative crude rate for the period 2004-2015 standing at 6.9 maternal deaths per 100.000 live births (Source: Death Registry, Health Monitoring Unit, Ministry of Health, Cyprus).

Article 13
Economic and social life

Women and poverty

143. The Cyprus economy is emerging from a deep economic crisis which has severely affected the welfare of its people. The number of people exposed to poverty or social exclusion has increased, thus undermining the progress towards the achievement of the national poverty target, which is to decrease the at-risk-of poverty or social exclusion rate (AROPE) to 19.3% by 2020. The AROPE, which had risen significantly from 23.3% in 2008 to 27.8% in 2013, decreased by 0.4 percentage points to 27.4% in 2014.

144. Minimising the consequences of the economic crisis on the most vulnerable groups of the population is a priority. The Council of Ministers adopted in November 2014, the National Strategy on Social Policy for the period 2014-2020, which addresses the promotion of children's welfare, the reform of the welfare system, active inclusion, long-term care and effective governance.

Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI)

145. At the heart of the reform of the welfare system was the introduction of the GMI Scheme, which will ultimately replace the public assistance benefit. The GMI aims to provide assistance to individuals and families that cannot, despite their efforts, gain enough income to support themselves. The GMI provides for basic needs based on a minimum consumption basket and also covers other needs, such as housing (rent or mortgage interest), municipality taxes and extraordinary needs, as well as care needs and long-term care. The GMI is also provided to families who were not receiving any income support benefits in the past as it incorporates a new group, the working poor, as an eligible group and consolidates low-income pensioners.

146. Furthermore, the GMI provides the framework for two mechanisms: social care and social intervention to GMI recipients. Social care provides for the subsidisation of the cost of home, institutional, respite and day care including child care of GMI recipients. Social intervention refers to the activation and social inclusion of GMI recipients. This action includes a wide spectrum of services provided to a person or family unit receiving the GMI that can empower and support them in their social integration. The ultimate purpose of this action is the employment rehabilitation through co-operation with the PES.

Social care programmes

147. Within its National Strategy on Social Policy, the Government is paying particular attention to the provision of accessible, affordable and quality social care programmes at the local level (i.e. child care services, long-term social care services

to the elderly and persons with disabilities, counselling services). In this direction, the Government, through the competent Service (Social Welfare Services), is implementing the State Aid Scheme, under Regulation 360/2012 for the provision of services of general economic interest (De minimis) where NGOs and local authorities may receive state aid based on certain criteria for the development and functioning of social care programmes. In 2015, 156 organizations received state aid for the operation of quality social care programmes, with a total budget of around €6 million.

Migrant women domestic workers

148. One of the most vulnerable groups of migrants is domestic workers from third country nationals (non-members of the European Union). In the period under review, further measures were introduced for the benefit of domestic workers. In 2015, the Ministerial Committee on the Employment of Aliens changed the basic criteria for the employment of migrant workers, giving them the right to request a release-paper from their first day of employment. Previously, a release-paper could not be given to foreign workers before they had completed their first three months of employment with the first employer. This change has reduced the potential for exploitation, since migrant workers can immediately leave unsuitable employers, and has assisted in better-matching domestic workers and employers.

149. The maximum period for a residence and employment permit has been increased to six years. Renewal of residence permits after the initial four years can be biennial, rather than annual. In addition, renewal of residence permits is permitted for all categories of employers after the lapse of six years, in case non-EU nationals wish to continue their employment with the same employer. Several other restrictions, such as those for the employment of males as domestic workers, have been lifted. In addition, the employment contract will now be sent to the domestic workers to sign before arrival in the Republic of Cyprus, to ensure that they are informed of the terms of their contract. The contract for domestic workers is currently being revised, eliminating outdated references and clarifying the rights and obligations of both domestic workers and employers.

150. An established procedure for the examination of complaints against the violation of the terms and conditions of the employment of migrants is in place to further protect their rights. The District Labour Relations Offices examine complaints filed in relation to possible breaches of contract and, based on mediatory meetings with both sides, a report is prepared and forwarded to the Labour Disputes Committee for final decision. Migrant workers may also file complaints at the Office of the Ombudsman.

151. It should be noted that labour disputes filed by foreign workers in the agricultural sector have more than halved, falling to only 143 in 2015 from 342 in 2008. Similarly, the number of labour disputes filed by foreign domestic workers has almost halved, dropping to 745 in 2015 from 1,316 in 2008.

152. If a violation of the employment contract has occurred, sanctions are imposed on the employer, including a strict warning, a notice of compliance or revocation of the permit of the employer to employ workers from non-EU countries. Internal mechanisms are established to ensure that such violations will not be repeated. If during the investigation of complaints there is reason to believe that trafficking or sexual exploitation has taken place, the complaint is forwarded to the relevant authorities.

153. Moreover, the Safety and Health (Amendment) Law, 2011(L.33(I)/2011) now includes domestic households and domestic workers.

Asylum seekers and refugees

154. The Refugee Law of 2000 [L.6(I)/2000] has been amended several times between 2002 and 2016, in order to conform with the Directives 2013/33/EU, 2013/32/EU, 2011/95/EU, 2001/55/EC, 2005/85/EC, 2003/86/EC, 2003/9/EC, 2004/83/EC and Regulation 604/2013 of the European Parliament and the European Council. The Refugees Laws of 2000 to 2016 (hereinafter the "Refugee Law") prescribe the rights and obligations of asylum seekers, refugees and persons granted subsidiary protection.

Applicants for international protection (asylum seekers)

155. The Asylum Service, established under the Refugee Law, publishes an information booklet in a language understood by the asylum seeker to inform him/her about his/her rights and obligations relating to reception conditions and non-governmental organizations/social groups providing legal support.

156. The asylum seeker has the right to free movement and residence in the Government controlled area of Cyprus provided that he/she provides the relevant authorities with his/her address.

157. The detention of an asylum seeker, solely because of his/her status as an applicant, is prohibited. The same applies to the detention of a minor (a person under the age of 18 years). Upon receipt of the confirmation letter, the asylum seeker is required to undergo a medical examination, which is carried out in a public hospital free of charge.

158. The Cyprus Refugee Law provides access to educational facilities of the public sector; in the case of a minor, he/she enjoys full access to the educational system under the same terms as the citizens of the Republic. Furthermore, a beneficiary of international protection, in accordance with this Law, is accorded the same treatment as the citizens of the Republic under the relevant laws and regulations, with regard to access to education. Those with insufficient financial resources are entitled to free medical care at any public hospital.

159. Currently, there is one Reception Centre operating in Cyprus: the Reception and Accommodation Centre for applicants of international protection at Kofinou, Larnaca District. The Asylum Service of the Ministry of Interior is the competent authority for its operation. The services provided to the residents of the Centre are: accommodation, three meals a day and cash allowance for extra food and clothing, which amounts to a monthly allowance of €40 for single/main person, plus €10 for each dependant.

160. During the period that their application is being considered, asylum seekers are offered carefully arranged accommodation, which is operated under the following principles:

(a) Accommodation of a sufficient standard of living is provided. Unmarried men and women are housed in separate wings;

(b) Referral of an unaccompanied minor is not permitted (except under certain preconditions). Unaccompanied minors are hosted in specific shelters for minors;

(c) Freedom of movement to and from the reception centre;

(d) The period of stay is temporary.

161. The competent authorities take into consideration the particular needs of vulnerable groups of asylum seekers, such as minors, unaccompanied minors,

persons with special needs, the elderly; pregnant women; single-parent families with minors, victims of trafficking, persons with severe diseases or disabilities; and those who have undergone torture, rape or other forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence, e.g. women victims of genital mutilation. For these vulnerable groups, special treatment regarding the asylum procedure and the reception conditions is provided.

162. The Director of the SWS ensures that persons who have suffered violence or torture receive the appropriate medical care. The SWS also have authority and responsibility with regard to minors. The best interests of the child are a primary consideration.

163. As regards the employment rights of asylum seekers, the Refugee Law provides that, after a nine-month period from the date of submission of their application, they are entitled to work in certain sectors of the economy.

Refugees

164. The following principles govern the application of the Refugee Law:

(a) A person who has been recognized as a refugee will not be expelled to a country where his/her life or freedom will be in danger or he/she will be subjected to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment, for reasons of sex, race, religion, nationality, membership in a social group or political beliefs;

(b) He/she will not be discriminated towards because of sex, race, religion, nationality, membership in a social group or political beliefs;

(c) He/she will be treated fairly by the competent authorities for refugees;

(d) His/her family unity is preserved;

(e) The Asylum Service provides, in a language that can be understood by the refugee, information about his/her rights and obligations.

165. As regards access to employment, the Refugee Law provides refugees with the same rights to employment as Cypriot citizens.

Subsidiary protection

166. Subsidiary protection beneficiaries have the same rights as recognised refugees, except the right to family reunification.

Internally displaced persons (IDP)

167. The Council of Ministers decided (Decision No.75.317, dated 19.6.2013) to recognise children of IDP mothers as displaced persons entitled to all rights the children of the IDP fathers have regarding all existing benefits (e.g. housing schemes). By the enactment of the necessary legislative amendment [L.170(I)/2013] on 27.12.2013, the children of IDP mothers can participate on an equal footing in housing schemes and in renting subsidy schemes.

Article 14
Rural women

168. According to data provided by the Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and the Environment in terms of employment in the agricultural sector in 2013, 5,004 were females and 13445 were males.

169. Within the framework of the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, women can apply for support to all measures of the Programme on equal terms with men. These include among others, Sub-Measure 4.1 "Investments which improve the overall performance and sustainability of agricultural farms" and Measure 6.1 "Business start-up for Young Farmers", which provides financial incentives for young farmers to start up viable agricultural holdings. In addition, sub-Measure 4.2, "Processing of agricultural products", provides support to the female rural population (among others) to start their own processing business.

Article 15
Equality before the law

170. Cyprus is a state party to the core international human rights instruments (United Nations and Council of Europe) covering the principle of gender equality.

171. In the period under review, Cyprus:

(a) Ratified the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse on 12 February 2015;

(b) Signed the Istanbul Convention on 16 June 2015. Cyprus was the 38th country to sign the Convention, and it is taking all necessary measures in order to speed the ratification of the Convention by the HOR. (For more measures, see Article 5 above);

(c) Submitted in 2014 the Cyprus National Report on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the outcomes of the 23rd special session of the General Assembly (2000) in the context of the 20th anniversary of the 4th World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 2015, commissioned by the NMWR.

172. Considerable national legislative measures relating to gender equality and human rights were enacted, including:

(a) The Prevention and Combating of Sexual Abuse, Sexual Exploitation of Children and Child Pornography Law, 2014 [L.91(I)/2014], transposing Directive 2011/93/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on combating sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children, and child pornography, replacing the Council Framework Decision 2004/68/JHA; and for the purposes of better implementation of the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (Ratification) Law; of the United Nations Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto (Ratification) Law; of the Convention on Cybercrime (Ratification) Law; on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Ratification) Law; of the European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights (Ratification) Law, as from time to time amended or substituted; as well as for the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, signed in Lanzarote on the 25th October, 2007;

(b) The Establishing of Minimum Standards on the Rights, Support and Protection of Victims of Crime Law, 2016 [L.51(I)/2016], transposing Directive 2012/29/EU on establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime;

(c) The Rights of Persons who are Arrested and Detained Law, 2014 [L.185(I)/2014] amending Law, 2005 [L.163(I)/2005];

(d) Three Maternity Protection Laws were enacted during 2011-2016: Law 2011 [L.70(I)/2011], Law 2015 [L.175(I)/2015] and Law 2016 [L.118(I)/2016]. These Laws improved the level of protection for pregnant women as follows: prohibition of dismissal of a pregnant worker provided that her employer has been informed of her pregnancy in writing (the same provisions equally apply to a woman who intends to adopt a child); extension of the maternity leave by an additional four weeks for each additional child in the case of multiple births; additional maternity leave in the case the child is hospitalised immediately after birth for health reasons.

Article 16
Family law

173. The reform of the family law to bring it in line with all United Nations and European binding legal instruments and guidelines has been among the priorities of the MJPO, and to this end, the Minister decided to establish in 2015: (a) an expert group composed of judges, lawyers and the CPCR and (b) a group of academics. The two groups submitted their proposals, which were elaborated/consolidated by the MJPO, taking on board all recommendations of the CPCR, thus putting the child's best interest as a primary consideration. In February 2017, the consolidated document has been disseminated electronically for public consultation until the end of February 2017. Following consultation, the MJPO will proceed promote the necessary amendments to the existing family law legislation.

The Thirteenth Amendment of the Constitution Law of 2015

174. A bill entitled "The Thirteenth Amendment of the Constitution Law of 2015" has been submitted to the HOR. This will enable family courts, in divorce cases to sit with a single judge. This measure is expected to significantly accelerate the judicial proceedings, for the benefit of all involved. Delays in such proceedings have proved to adversely affect women more than men.

The civil union law

175. The State's response to social relations of today, which include new forms of symbiotic relationships and a growing diversity, was the enactment of The Civil Union Law 2015 [L.184(I)/2015] on 9 December 2015, which introduced the institution of civil union in national legislation. Legally, a civil union (between same or opposite sex partners), has the same effects and consequences as a marriage solemnised in accordance with the Marriage Law, with the exception of issues relating to adoption. Up to January 2017, 88 civil unions had been solemnized.

Research

176. In compliance with the Concluding Observations, in October 2016 the MJPO assigned an external agency to undertake research on the economic consequences of divorce on both spouses focusing on gender-based disparities between spouses. The study will cover the period from the enactment of the family laws, e.g. L.216/1990 until today and is expected to be completed by the end of March 2017. The results of this study will be taken into consideration when reforming the family law.

Annex

Legislative measures

(Paragraph 11)

Legislative measures enacted during the period under review and relevant to the Convention:

A. International instruments

The Convention of the Council of Europe on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Ratification) Law, 2014 [L.21(III)/2014].

B. National legislation

- The Safety and Health at Work (Amendment) Law, 2011 [L.33(I)/2011]
- The Day Care Centres for School-Age Children (Amendment) Law, 2011 [L.63(I)/2011]
- The Maternity Protection (Amendment) Law, 2011 [L.70(I)/2011]
- The Homes for the Elderly and Disabled (Amendment) Law, 2011 [L.655(I)/2011]
- The Parental Leave and Leave on Grounds of Force Majeure (Amendment) Law, 2012 [L.47(I)/2012], repealing L.69(I)/2002
- Private Employment Agency Law, 2012 [L.126(I)/2012]
- Prevention and Combating of Trafficking and Exploitation of Human Beings and Protection of Victims Law, 2014 [L.60(I)/2014]
- The Prevention and Combating of Sexual Abuse, Sexual Exploitation of Children and Child Pornography Law, 2014 [L.91(I)/2014]
- The Minimum Guaranteed Income Law, 2014 [L.109(I)/2014]
- The Equal Treatment of Men and Women in Employment and Vocational Education (Amendment) Law, 2014 [L.150(I)/2014]
- The Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) (Amendment) Law, 2015 [L.172(I)/2015]
- The Maternity Protection (Amendment) Law, 2015 [L.175(I)/2015]
- The Establishing Minimum Standards on the Rights, Support and Protection of Victims of Crime Law, 2016 [L.51(I)/2016]
- The Maternity Protection (Amendment) Law, 2016 [L.118(I)/2016]